

VOICES AND VIEWPOINTS

CENTCOM News

U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers net finds, arrests

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Army and Task Force Baghdad Soldiers detained four suspected terrorists and seized multiple weapons in overnight and early-morning raids Feb. 26. Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division detained four local nationals late Feb. 25 in western Baghdad after observing the individuals driving suspiciously in a white vehicle. The suspected insurgents were held for further investigation. Around 7 a.m. Feb. 26, Task Force Baghdad Soldiers reported that a patrol from the Iraqi Army discovered a cache of material used to make improvised explosive devices.

Operation River Blitz continues with help of Iraqi citizens

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, Iraq — Iraqi and U.S. forces continued increased security operations by raiding a mosque, detaining 17 suspected insurgents and seizing several weapons caches throughout the Al Anbar province as Operation River Blitz rolled on for a fifth day. Those detained Feb. 24 bring to 104 the number of suspected insurgents detained since Operation River Blitz began Sunday. In Haqlaniyah, Iraqi soldiers from the Freedom Guard Battalion, Iraqi National Guard, and U.S. Marines from Regimental Combat Team-7, 1st Marine Division, conducted a joint raid on a mosque that produced six detainees and insurgent propaganda at approximately 12:30 p.m. The Freedom Guards cleared the mosque as U.S. Marines provided security outside. North of Ar Ramadi, a local civilian directed a U.S. Marine combat patrol to an improvised-explosive device, which consisted of four 105 mm artillery rounds that were daisy-chained together in a brown bag hidden underneath a pile of leaves at approximately 10:00 a.m. At approximately 11:15 a.m. in the central portion of the city, insurgents shot an Iraqi citizen in the abdomen when they fired a rocket-propelled grenade and small arms fire at U.S. Marines. The Marines provided medical treatment to the injured

civilian after immediately returning fire at the insurgents, who fled the area. In southern Fallujah, an Iraqi civilian guided a U.S. Marine patrol to a weapons cache, which consisted of one 82 mm mortar round, seven 57 mm rounds, three 23 mm rounds and one 30 mm round at approximately 1 p.m. Earlier in the day, another Iraqi civilian guided another U.S. Marine patrol to a weapons cache in the southeastern portion of the city that consisted of one missile warhead, 100 pounds of TNT and one 120 mm mortar round. U.S. forces detained 11 suspected insurgents and seized several weapons caches during operations



throughout other areas of the Al Anbar province Feb. 24. Insurgent propaganda and materials to make improvised-explosive devices were also found with the weapons caches. The seizure and subsequent destruction of the weapons cache disrupts anti-Iraqi forces' ability to launch attacks against Iraqi and U.S. forces and civilians. The 1st Marine Division of the I Marine Expeditionary Force stands committed with the Iraqi security forces to disrupt and defeat anti-Iraqi forces while providing enhanced security to the people of Al Anbar province.

Coalition forces recover four weapons caches

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Coalition forces recovered four weapons caches Friday. The first cache was recovered by Coalition forces in Paktya Province and contained eight fuses, five anti-personnel mines, two ICOM radios, one RPD machine gun, two RPD ammo canisters with 100 rounds, three primer charges for mortars and one unidentified firing device. Coalition forces have secured the cache and will destroy it at a later date. The second cache was

turned into Coalition forces by an Afghan citizen in Kunar Province. The cache contained 25 82 mm mortars, one 50-caliber machine gun, 5,000 50-caliber machine gun rounds, one vehicle mount and one mortar tripod. Coalition forces have secured the weapons cache and will turn it over to the Afghan Security Forces. The third cache was recovered by Coalition forces in Herat Province and contained 20 to 30 100 mm anti-tank rounds and five 100 mm fragmentation high-explosive rounds. Coalition forces have secured the cache and will destroy it at a later date. The fourth cache was delivered to Coalition forces by an Afghan citizen in Uruzgan Province. The cache contained 14 rocket-propelled grenade rounds and six cans of PKM machine-gun ammo, each containing 200 rounds. Coalition forces have secured the weapons cache.

Iraqi police service graduates 204

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi Police Service graduated 204 police officers from advanced and specialty courses at the Adnan Training Facility, Feb. 24, as part of the Iraqi government's ongoing effort to train its security forces. The courses consist of Basic Criminal Investigation with 60 graduates, Executive Leadership with 27 graduates, First-Line Supervision with 33 graduates, Incident Command System with 29 graduates, Interviews & Interrogations with 20 graduates, and Internal Controls with 35 graduates. The Basic Criminal Investigation course covers topics such as theft, burglary, arson, robbery, sexual offenses, and homicide investigation. Participants also receive instruction and hands-on training in fingerprinting, photography, tool marks and plaster casting.

Executive Leadership, designed for senior police leaders, covers executive level concepts of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. Other areas covered in the course are visionary leadership, organizational values, interpersonal communication skills, motivational techniques and strategies, along with strategic planning. First-Line Supervision focuses on a combination of human rights training, ethics, and policing in a democracy and includes a heavy focus on interpersonal skills.

Incident Command teaches first response techniques to a crime or accident scene, how to coordinate agencies responding to the scene and managing assets at the scene. Interviews & Interrogations covers advanced interview and interrogation techniques and includes the preservation and protection of human rights, and the importance of ethical behavior during interviews and interrogations. Internal Controls provides training on how to deal with personnel complaints and allegations, as well as police conduct in general. Training includes the processing of complaints and conducting follow-up investigations to determine the facts of allegations made against members of the Iraqi Police Service. Officers who participated in these courses previously completed either an 8-week basic training course for new recruits or the 3-week 'transitional integration program' course designed for prior-service officers. The police officers report back for continued duty at their respective stations immediately.

One AIF killed, three detained in Tikrit

TIKRIT — Iraqi Police and Task Force Liberty Soldiers detained four Iraqis after responding to a report of an explosion from the Tikrit Joint Coordination Center at about 8:30 p.m. Feb. 25. One insurgent died of his wounds and one was hospitalized due to the explosion, which the police investigation determined to be an improvised explosive device that detonated inside an abandoned house. Both men were wanted by police as suspects in previous attacks on Coalition Forces.

Marne Voices

The Frontline
 Readers respond to the question:

“Who is your pick to win the NCAA basketball championsip?”



“Duke because they always win.”

Pvt. Brannon Cope
 A Co, 2-121st Inf
 Georgia National Guard



“Georgia Tech- all we gotta do is get in.”

Sgt. Carlisle Davis
 HHC, 648 Eng.

“Auburn- cause it's the only one I follow.”

Lt. George French
 3rd Military Police Bn.



“Illinois, because they're undefeated.”

Spc. Jeffrey Owen
 A Co, 1-133rd MP



“North Carolina because they have the total package as seen by their win over Maryland.”

Maj. Dwayne Reynolds
 Mobilization Operations



“Illinois, because of the way they've been playing. They've overcome adversity.”

Sgt. Maj. Robert Sheahan
 2-130 Inf.
 Georgia National Guard

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUNTER ARMY AIRFIELD MASTER PLAN AND ITS EFFECT ON HISTORIC RESOURCES
 AT HUNTER ARMY AIRFIELD, GEORGIA

The Department of the Army hereby gives notice of a determination of an adverse effect to the Strategic Air Command Historic District at Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF). Fort Stewart has entered into consultations with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the effects of the implementation of the HAAF Master Plan on the Historic District. The consultations address the impacts to historic resources and proposed mitigative actions. All public review comments concerning the project, its effects, and the proposed mitigative actions must be received no later than Mar. 8, 2005. A copy of the consultation letter detailing

the project and the proposed mitigation is available for public review from Feb. 7 to Mar. 8, 2005 at the following libraries. Hunter Army Airfield Library Bldg. 1290 165 Markwell Street Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. 31409 Tues. — Wed.; 11:30 a.m. — 4:30 p.m. Mall Branch Library 7 Mall Annex Savannah, Ga. 31406 Mon. — Thurs.; 9 a.m. — 9 p.m. Fri. — Sat.; 9 a.m. — 6 p.m. Sun. 2 — 6 p.m.

Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum Library 175 Bourne Ave. Pooler, Ga. 31322 Mon. — Fri.; 10 am — 4 pm

Request all comments be mailed to the following address: Mr. George Harris Environmental Division Directorate of Public Works HQS, Fort Stewart 1550 Frank Cochran Drive BLdg. 1137 Fort Stewart, Ga. 31314-4927

The Frontline

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Iraqi tribal leaders discuss issues, agree on progress

Story and Photos by
Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st Bde. PAO

TIKRIT, Iraq — Sheik tribal leaders from Salah ad Din province in Iraq assembled for a meeting in Tikrit to discuss issues and announce the names of elected governing council members for the province Feb. 21.

“The sheiks’ council of the Salah ad Din province is an advisory council to the governor and the provincial council of Salah ad Din,” said Maj. Christopher M. Diccico, Civil Affairs Officer and Iraqi Security Force liaison for 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. “They are non-official leaders of their communities. They play a very important role in maintaining stability. The council meets twice a month to discuss issues from across the province.”

The spokesman for the meeting opened the discussion with praise for democracy and the success of the elections. He also wanted to explain to the sheiks why the elections and cooperation with coalition forces were important.

“If you travel to any other place in Iraq, conditions are not as safe as they are in our province,” said Sheik Jubara, meeting spokesman and leader of the largest tribe in Salah ad Din province, the Al Juboori tribe. “The reason the security is so good in our province is because of the cooperation with the coalition. Many people did not vote because they were frightened of attacks by insurgents. We will work with the coalition to improve this situation. We have to build a new Iraq. Iraq’s future will depend on the success of these elections.”

Names for the Salah ad Din province governing council were released by the



Sheik Naji al Jubara, meeting spokesman and head sheik of the al Juboori tribe, stresses a point while talking with council members about issues and progress in Salah ad Din province during a Feb.21 conference.

Iraqi National Assembly in Baghdad. The new council will be the cornerstone for change and improvement in their province.

“The sheiks who were chosen to be our leaders will be responsible for changing the Iraqi constitution and electing a new president,” Jubara said. “We have to have good leadership to be successful in creating a peaceful Iraq. We all want to live peacefully, and the only way to do this is to have a democratic Iraq.”

The sheiks agreed to Jubara’s statements, but had issues concerning their own security and how they would accomplish the changes needed to rebuild and renew their country.

“I need more bodyguards if I am to be responsible for my people,” said Sheik Mohammed al Juboori, Sheik of the Shirkat area of Salah ad Din province. “I currently have 70 bodyguards to protect me and my staff, but some of them haven’t been paid in over a month. Since the coalition is not responsi-

ble for these funds, I need to know where and when we will obtain the wages for the existing bodyguards I have and the ones I will need in the future.”

Jubara informed the committee the funds for such urgent needs will be provided by the new Iraqi government in Baghdad.

The new constitution would decide how much each group would get to support their needs.

Another issue that vexed Juboori went back to the sectarian way of thinking in between the tribes.

He complained that when he had spoken to Kurdish leaders in Kirkuk, they said since the town had once been a part of Kurdistan it should belong only to the Kurds. Juboori said he disagreed with the leaders, and Kirkuk should belong to all Iraqi people.

“I hope the new constitution will resolve many of the sectarian issues between the Kurds, Turks and Arabs,” Jubara said. “We need to



Salah ad Din province governor Hamed Hmood Shakti signs a document for sheiks who attended the council meeting in Tikrit Feb. 21

show that Iraq is for all Iraqi people. Iraq is unified, and we need to forget the separatist ways of thinking. I am not working for myself, but for all the sheiks and people of our province.”

Insurgency and security were thoroughly discussed

during the meeting. Insurgents who struck in the province claimed they were involved in jihad, or cleansing the land of non-Muslim people. Jubara disagreed.

“You have to understand, the people who destroy the works of Iraqis, the oil and

other resources are not doing it for jihad. These are acts of terrorism,” Jubara said. “I think these people come from other countries to ruin the progress we are trying to make. Only through unification of all our people will we be able to defeat terrorism.”



Victory Park, downtown Hinesville, is now home to two large yellow bows — one seen here is "tied around an old oak tree."



High school students from Liberty County High School provided music for the evening's event.



Tchaka Grant, a Cub Scout from Pack 510 here in Hinesville, lights a ceremonial candle for Lt. Col. Noelle Nichole, 3rd Infantry Division rear detachment commander, as Kimberly Webster and Connie Thrift, county commission vice chair, look on.

Hinesville hosts yellow bow ceremony downtown

Story and Photos by
Sgt. James Strine
Frontline Staff

The Hinesville Military Affairs Committee sponsored its Operation Yellow Bow Ceremony at Victory Park in downtown Hinesville Monday.

The ceremony was an effort to bolster local residents' support for deployed troops and their families by handing out yellow ribbons, American flags and candles to display throughout the community.

"It's fitting as the 3rd Infantry Division assumes it's responsibility in Iraq, that we assume our responsibility to the friends and family of Fort Stewart," Hinesville mayor, Honorable Thomas J. Spratcliffe Jr., said.

Hundreds of supporters turned out for the event to include loyal 3rd Infantry Division veterans, local Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts, families of deployed Soldiers, and Fort Stewart community leaders.

Kimberly Webster, wife of 3rd ID Commander Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, Garrison Commander Col. John M. Kidd, and the mayor all spoke to the crowd before unveiling two large yellow bows around the oak tree in the

center of Victory Park.

"We have not been in a community that has embraced and supported the soldiers as much as you do here," Webster said of all the places she and her husband have been stationed.

The speakers urged people to place yellow ribbons and other signs of support throughout the community so that when the 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers return home, they would know they had the support of their hometown all the while.

Veterans and other volunteers were on hand to pass out large yellow ribbons similar to the ones now on display in Victory Park for families to take home and display.

The Liberty County High School Quartet performed the music of the evening and boys from local Cub Scout Pack 510 participated by lighting candles for each member of the crowd during a moment of prayer for the troops in Iraq.

"In a very real way, this community feels it shares in the mission of Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield in the War on Terrorism," Spratcliffe said.

Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah also held a similar ceremony to urge community members there in supporting deployed troops.



Kimberly Webster and Garrison Commander Col. John M. Kidd unveil one of two yellow ribbons in Victory Park, downtown Hinesville.



Hundreds of people gathered Monday evening for the unveiling of two yellow bows around an oak tree. Onlookers also had the chance to pick up bows to take home.

New promotion policy enables Soldiers to automatically advance

Gary Sheftick
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — A shortage of sergeants in some specialties has prompted a new Army policy in which corporals and specialists could be automatically promoted without a board.

Under the Army's semi-centralized promotion policy approved Feb. 23, all eligible specialists and corporals (with 48 months in service and a year in grade) will be placed on a promotion list. Then, if a military occupational specialty falls beneath 100-percent strength at the E-5 level, some Soldiers on the list will be automatically promoted.

The new policy could potentially affect about 19,000 corporals and specialists currently in the active component, according to G1 personnel officials.

"Are we taking away a commander's authority? Absolutely not," said retired Sgt. Maj. Gerald Purcell, G1 personnel policy integrator for enlisted professional development.

Commanders will have the ability to remove a Soldier from the Sergeant Recommended List, Purcell explained, if a Soldier is not trained, or otherwise unqualified. There will be a 15-day window after the automatic promotion list is generated for commanders to remove names.

"If a Soldier should truly not be a sergeant," Purcell said,

"then commanders should stop it."

But he went on to say that in units with E-5 shortages, many specialists are doing the job of a sergeant and deserve to receive the pay and recognition.

Even under the new policy, Purcell said most promotions to sergeant will still go to those who appear before a promotion board.

"The only time anyone is automatically promoted is when all Soldiers who have gone through (board) procedures are promoted and the MOS is still not 100 percent for the E-5 grade," Purcell said.

The new promotion policy should eliminate specialties that historically have a shortage of sergeants, known as Star MOS's, Purcell said.

The Army currently has 31 Star MOS's, ranging from 13F (fire support specialist) to 98K (signal collection/identification specialist.) Career fields with STAR MOS's include field artillery, aviation, armor, engineer, communications and information systems, signal, psychological operations, fire control,

public affairs, maintenance, chemical, transportation, ordinance, supply and military intelligence.

The Army is currently short 1,549 sergeants in Star MOS's.

In recent months, the number of Soldiers recommended for promotion to sergeant has decreased to just above 10 percent of the eligible population, according to G1 stats. This compares to more than 30 percent of those eligible being recommended for promotion 10 years ago.

"It is the field's responsibility to grow our future leaders," Purcell said. He added that promotions should be based on potential, not just performance.

"We believe you should give a Soldier an opportunity to succeed after four years in the Army," Purcell said. "It's what's right for the Army."

The creation of new brigade combat teams and units of action are adding to the shortage of sergeants, Purcell said. He explained that new units require senior NCOs, accelerating the promotion of mid-grade NCOs, resulting in more E-5 vacancies.

"We need an E-5 promotion for every growth in the NCO structure," Purcell said.

In any case, Purcell said the new promotion policy should eliminate the shortages. He said it's a great tool not only to man the Army at the proper grade level, but also to motivate Soldiers.

Soldiers placed on the promotion list automatically, without participating in a promotion board, will only be given the minimum of 350 points.

Purcell emphasized that these Soldiers will not be promoted to sergeant unless an MOS falls below 100-percent operating strength and no other Soldiers with more points are available to promote.

Soldiers who want to receive promotion points based on their actual accomplishments need to go through the promotion board procedures and the processes outlined in AR 600-8-9, Purcell said.

For instance, Soldiers integrated onto the promotion list without a board appearance will not be awarded additional points based on the Airborne promotion advantage.

The Army's new promotion policy will actually help first sergeants and others in the chain of command to better manage their units, said Sgt. Maj. Reynald Domingo of the Army's Directorate of Personnel Management, G1.



Courtesy Photo

Iraqi hospital receives ambulances from Army

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st Bde. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq — To help remedy one of the many problems the Iraqis face in rebuilding their nation, Coalition Forces donated five ambulances to the Tikrit hospital, Feb. 23.

This donation will bring the Iraqis another step forward in their effort to build a stable system of social services, said Capt. Chad Marley, brigade surgeon, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. One of the main problems health care and emergency care workers were facing was the lack of transportation for the sick and wounded. This donation will give the Salah Ad Din province a better ambulance-to-person ratio.

"The people here needed ambulances to replace the older ones," Marley said. "We want to get them to a point where they have one ambulance for every 20,000 people."

The province had ambulances before, but they were not up to standard for the amount of work that was required of them, said Thamer Najim Abdulla, an ambulance driver.

"Before we had ambulances from the old regime," he said. "The ambulances we had were not very fast, making it difficult for us to respond quickly during an emergency. The new ambulances are great. I hope we can get more of them in the future."

Adnan Zidan Khalaf, Chief of the Manager Directorate Office in Tikrit, said health care service workers and health ministry officials are very happy to have the new vehicles, as it is the first time they have received any new kind of transportation for emergencies since Saddam Hussein was in power.

Now the emergency services will be more effective due to the acquisition of the ambulances and a Joint Coordination Center for the dispatch of the services, Khalaf said.

"We receive all the calls at one location," Khalaf said. "It is much easier this way, because we can react faster to provide first aid. It was much more difficult to do that with the equipment we had before."

Legal Notices

Anyone having personal property, claims against or who is indebted to the estate of **Staff Sgt. Steven G. Bayow**, B CO/2-7 INF/1BCT, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, contact 1st Lt. Elizabeth Barnhart, G CO/3FSB/1BCT, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, (912) 767-3393, or (210) 643-3650. (3)

Anyone having personal property, claims against or who is indebted to the estate of **Sgt. Daniel Torres**, B CO/2-7 INF/1BCT, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, contact 1st Lt. Jacqueline M. Bertrams, G CO/3FSB/1BCT, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, (912) 767-3393, or (912) 223-1196. (3)

Anyone having personal property, claims against or who is indebted to the estate of **Sgt. Chad W. Lake**, C Troop, 5-7 CAV, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, contact 1st Lt. Cory J. Cousins, Division Fires Brigade, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, (912) 767-7066. (2)

Anyone having personal property, claims against or who is indebted to the estate of **Staff Sgt. Renee Knox Jr.**, C Troop 5-7 CAV, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, contact 1st Lt. Eric Haynes, 1st BDE 5-7 CAV, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, (912) 767-1515/2179. (1)

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Anyone having personal property, claims against or who is indebted to the estate of **Spc. Dakotah**, C Company, 5-7 Cav, Ft. Stewart, Ga. 31314, contact 2nd Lt. Bonnie M. Cowles, 260th QM Btallation, HHD, Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. 31409, (912) 352-5689. (1)



AER contribution slips are signed by (left to right) Command Sergeant Major Timothy Andrews, 224 MI Bn; Lt. Col. Jeffery Goble, garrison commander, Hunter Army Airfield ; Lt. Col. Joseph Hosack, commander, 224 MI Bn; Command Sergeant Major Lewis Kellam, Hunter Army Airfield.

‘Taking care of their own’ at Hunter AAF

Nancy Gould
Frontline Staff

The Hunter Army Emergency Relief Fundraising Campaign kicked off Feb. 24 at Army Community Service, and continues through May 15.

Lt. Col. Jeffery Goble, garrison commander, Hunter Army Airfield told those who attended the ceremony that, “the campaign exists for us to take care of our own,” something the Army’s done since 1942, when the private nonprofit organization began.

“Our goal is 100 percent solicitation,” he said. “We want to get these campaign slips out

so that everyone has a chance to contribute.”

Hunter 2005 AER Campaign Coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class Shannon Dixon, 260th Quartermaster Bn, said her battalion will send those slips downrange to deployed Soldiers.

She expects other battalions to do the same.

The funds collected by AER provide financial assistance to those with valid financial emergency needs.

Those eligible include — Soldiers and their family members; Soldiers who have retired from active duty and their family members; Army Reserve Component members on contin-

uous active duty for more than 30 consecutive days, and their family members; and widows(ers) and orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after retirement.

Financial assistance is also available for unmarried dependent children who need assistance for undergraduate level study through the AER education scholarship program.

In 2004, \$6.8 million (\$5.1 million in allotment pledges and \$1.7 million in cash) were contributed Army wide by Soldiers, active duty and retired.

Last year at Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, Army Emergency Relief collected

\$123,791.06 and assisted 6,430 families with loans and grants totaling \$3,489,652.23.

“The most common request is for money to pay rent, utilities, car maintenance, accident deductibles and unexpected emergencies,” Dixon said, adding that relief is issued in the form of no-interest loans or grants made possible with contributions from Soldiers.

This year Dixon expects that the spouses of deployed Soldiers will make the most requests for assistance.

“We want to take care of them here so they won’t have to go off the installation for help,” Dixon said.

Fort Stewart Hosts Travel Fair

Get great travel & tourism information from all over the southeast and learn about regional attractions, leisure travel opportunities, & great getaway spots, Wednesday, March 9, at the Travel Fair, 3 - 7 p.m. at Club Stewart here. Contact Roni Stevens or Susan Chipple at (912) 767-8609 for more information.

Vendors include:

Atlanta Braves

Bicycle Across Georgia

Georgia Mountain Fair

Sea Palms Golf & Tennis, St. Simons

Sun Spree Resort, Orlando, Fla.

Disney

Universal Studios

Silver Springs

Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede

Orlando Area Hotels

Jekyll Island Resorts

Old Town Trolley

Melon Bluff

Various Travel Agencies

Myrtle Beach Resorts

Yellow Ribbons helps maintain ties

Catherine Caruso
Frontline Staff

Members of the Hunter Army Airfield military community made a living monument to Soldiers serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world with a “Yellow Ribbon Tree Ceremony” outside Hunter Chapel on Feb. 15.

The monument, or, “memory tree” is a large oak, draped with yellow ribbon, that shades the chapel’s courtyard.

Before a monthly prayer service at the chapel for Soldiers who’ve deployed, military family members and rear detachment Soldiers created the ribbons to

honor their friends and loved ones, and to remind others that those who’ve deployed may be out of sight, but are far from out of mind.

Susan Titre’s ribbon was for her husband, Sgt. Vernant Titre, who is serving with the 512th Quartermaster Bn. He deployed just weeks before their 16th wedding anniversary.

“I’m just here to make a ribbon, put it on the tree and say ‘hey, you’re being remembered,’” she said,

Titre said her husband has been gone for a month, but she misses him already.

“It’s not his first deployment, but, this one was the hardest,” she said.

Spc. Michelle Dameron made a ribbon for a Soldier in her unit, who is overseas with another unit. A ribbon for her boyfriend, who is serving in Iraq, was already on the tree,

The Soldiers whose names are written on each ribbon may be far away, but the tree will ensure that they are far from forgotten, Lt. Col. John Foxworth, Hunter installation chaplain, said.

“Every time you pass by this way you will see this tree, and I know you will remember your loved one,” he said. “And I ask you to do one more thing. I ask you to pray for them.”

The wife of the division’s highest-ranking soldier, Lori O’Neill, said such shows of support benefit Soldiers as much as they do the families they leave behind.

“I know all of you have noticed in the area surrounding the 3rd Infantry Division communities that yellow ribbons are going up everywhere. That lets everyone know how supported we are, as family members, by our civilian community brothers and sisters who care so much about us,” she said.

“It makes the jobs our Soldiers are doing forward so much easier, because they know that we’re taken care of by such wonderful people who care so much about us,” she added.

Webster and Lori O’Neill, wife of Brig. Gen Mark O’Niell, assistant division commander for support, placed the first ribbons on the tree.

Webster said the memory tree honors the sacrifices of all Soldiers — not just those who are overseas, but those in the rear who are taking care of military families in their absence. Yellow ribbon prayer services will continue to be held throughout the deployment, on the third Tuesday of each month, at 1:30 p.m. in Hunter Chapel. Those who cannot attend may add names to the tree by bringing their yellow ribbon to the chapel.



Catherine Caruso

Military spouse, Susan Titre hangs a yellow ribbon for her husband on Hunter Chapel’s “Memory Tree”.

Where did the yellow ribbon come from?

According to research by Gerald Parsons, a Library of Congress folklorist and librarian for the National Folklife Center, the yellow ribbon is a folk symbol of recent origin, with roots in both folk tradition and pop culture.

But why ribbons, and why yellow ribbons specifically, remains shrouded in mystery.

Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown wrote “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree” in 1972, and Tony Orlando and Dawn made the song a hit the following year.

In articles written for the “Folklife Center News,” and based on materials submitted to the Library of Congress’ yellow ribbon archive, Parsons traced the song’s theme to a story, widely circulated in 1960’s and made into a teleplay starring James Earl Jones in 1971, based on the New Testament parable of the prodigal son.

In that story, a prisoner writes home before he is released, and asks his family to place a white handkerchief on the tree outside their home if they will have him back.

But Parsons and other folklore experts say the yellow ribbon symbol is even older.

In the 1949 movie “Round Her Neck She Wore A Yellow Ribbon,” women wear the symbol to signify their love for Cavalry officers in the movie, set a short time after the Civil War. The movie took its name and the yellow ribbon symbol from its theme song, which Parsons said is based on an old folk tune of the same name.

The earliest version Parsons found referring to a yellow ribbon was from 1917, but versions of the tune and it’s theme of wearing something to signify a far-off love are even found in Shakespeare’s works, he wrote.

Dr. Jack Santino, a professor of folklore and popular culture at Bowling Green State University, said the wearing symbols to signify love, fidelity, and to make statements of affection is a tradition deeply enmeshed with western culture.

“It’s a general thing. The wedding ring is something you wear to show you were married. When I was a kid, people wore black when someone died. In the British song, a woman says, ‘around my hat I will wear a green willow,’ and ‘it is for my true love who is far, far away,” Santino said.

The military connection is also hazy.

The theme of far-off love is a natural fit for the military, because soldiers are frequently separated from their loved ones in every era, Santino said.

But in a 19th century version in the Library of Congress archive, the singer is not a woman but a man who is pining for his lady love.

Parsons found versions sung on college campuses in the 1920’s and 1930’s that turned the yellow ribbons into garters in various school colors, and a songbook published in the 1960’s that calls it an old Army marching tune, reintroducing the yellow ribbon symbol alongside stanzas from the 1920’s college songs.

Versions of the cadence are still used to drill basic trainees today.

The yellow ribbon transformed into a symbol of hope for the safety and return of those held captive during the Iran hostage crisis.

In 1991, the yellow ribbon reappeared as a way to show support for US troops during the Persian Gulf War.

Santino said the way yellow ribbons are frequently displayed also resembles the blue star flags that hung in windows during World War II.

“To wear a ribbon, it would only be seen by people who knew you. Now, people are reaching out more, to involve the larger community,” he said.

The yellow ribbon emblems that grace so many homes, utility poles, mailboxes, and even automobiles are part of a larger movement of Americans reaching out to their community, in a more mobile culture where many do not know their neighbors, Santino said.

“It’s kind of the opposite of what it sounds, it’s making things more personal instead of impersonal,” he said. “It’s the development of a real ritual, something where people gather and take comfort from that shared sense of community.”

Today, the ribbons are like a yellow light that blazes from on porch fronts and tree trunks, and lapel pins, and web sites and even bumper stickers.. Wherever Soldiers are deployed, their communities leave a light on, in the form of yellow ribbons, until their troops come marching home.

171st Aviation comes home

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Roy Henry
Georgia National Guard

Despite delays caused by bad weather and aircraft maintenance problems, 30 members of Georgia's Company H, 171st Aviation arrived late Tuesday evening to a rousing hero's welcome by family members at Fort Stewart's Caro Gym.

It was December, 2003, when the unit, whose pilots and aircrews are from Georgia, Florida, Kentucky and Texas, were mobilized for the War on Terror.

In March 2004, the Army Airmen headed to Iraq where they and their C-23 Sherpa fixed-wing aircraft spent nearly a year ferrying troops and supplies across the skies of that war-torn country.

"It seemed as if the 'powers to be' were throwing as many obstacles in the way of our getting home as they could find," Staff Sgt. Jeff Trigg, a flight engineer, said as he held his 7-year-old daughter Alexi close after Tuesday's ceremony. "Still, I think we all knew that eventually we'd be in the arms of the ones we've been missing for so long, and that's all that mattered."

Company H's ordeal began when the Air Force C-5 Galaxy on which it was riding was diverted to Charleston because of bad weather. Originally, the aircraft was to touch down at Savannah's Hunter Army Airfield around 9 a.m.

However, heavy fog in Savannah and the surrounding area made visibility bad, and the situation didn't change until later.

The fog eventually lifted, but even that didn't get the group of Army Aviators and aircrews any closer to the homecoming with their families. At some point in the process of getting

to Hunter Airfield the aircraft suffered mechanical difficulties and its takeoff was delayed, said Col. Dannis Livingston who commands Georgia Army National Guard Aviation.

"Apparently problems occurred with the aircraft's electrical generator, which caused the aircrew to decide that the safest thing to do was stay on the ground and get the problems fixed," Livingston said.

Back at Fort Stewart's Caro Gym, families waited patiently throughout the day and into the night for their Soldiers to arrive.

Anxious, but understanding of the need to put safety first, wives like Tiffany Muse of Kennesaw, Ga. said the waiting did put a bit of a strain on them. Many of them, she explained had been at the gym all day hoping to look out the door and see the buses carrying their husbands pull up.

"We'd all expected to have them with us earlier in the day, but we're also Army wives and we know things happen that are beyond anyone's control," Muse said shortly before the buses carrying her husband aviation life support specialist Sgt. Matthew Muse and his fellow flyers pulled up outside Caro.

For the Muses it would be an exceptionally happy homecoming because the sergeant, it seems, didn't know his wife would be there to welcome him. Muse said she had told him she would see him the day he was ready to come home because she had no one to watch their two children. When he realized his wife was out in the crowd, it really made his day, Muse added.

"I couldn't believe it," he said with a great smile between the hugs and kisses. "I was totally, totally surprised."

It was around 7:45 p.m.

when the C-5 carrying Company H finally made it to Hunter, and it was 9 p.m. before the buses that brought the Soldiers to Fort Stewart pulled up outside the gym.

When the group entered the gym, the shouts, cheers and cries of "welcome home, we love you" could probably be heard for blocks around. There may have been only 30 families, but there definitely was no shortage of lungpower for the occasion, said Karen Bergfield of Davenport, Fla. Her husband is Florida Army National Guard Sgt. Gene Bergfield, a flight engineer with 171st Aviation at Brooksville, Fla.

After a short welcome back by Livingston and Lt. Col. Michael Hogan, Fort Stewart's deputy garrison commander for mobilization and reserve affairs, families rushed the gym floor in search of their Soldiers.

"I'm tickled to death that he's back, that they're all back," said Mary Trigg after she and Alexi stopped embracing Trigg's husband. "It's like Christmas only a whole lot better."

Alexi, who clung to her dad's neck, simply smiled and said, "I missed him so much."

In the end, the Soldiers and families of Company H had to wait, at least, five more days while the unit moved from active duty status back to its status as a National Guard unit. And yet, said Dena Walker of Brooksville, Fla., and the wife of Florida Army Guard Staff Sgt. John Walker, that time would go by swiftly.

After all, she explained, she and the other families had waited and prayed for their Soldiers to come home. Waiting five more days, she said, doesn't matter "now that the guys are back on home ground."



Deana Walker (right), wife of Florida Army National Guard Staff Sgt. John Walker, cries joyfully while receiving comfort from friend Karen Bergfield, who is the wife of Florida Guardsman Sgt. Gene Bergfield.



Tiffany Muse and her husband Sgt. Matthew Muse embrace for the first time since his nearly yearlong deployment to Iraq.

POLICE REPORTS



• **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 18-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charges:** Larceny of AAFES property, failure to obey lawful order or regulation
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Private, 19-year-old male, 4th Bde.
• **Charge:** Failure to appear (contempt).
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** (Ret.) Staff Sgt., 49-year-old male.
• **Charge:** Criminal trespass.
• **Location:** Hunter.

• **Subject:** (Ret.) Lt. Commander, 56-year-old female.
• **Charges:** Driving under the influence, possession of open container while operating vehicle
• **Location:** Hunter.

• **Subject:** Civilian, 22-year-old male.
• **Charges:** Criminal trespass, damage to private property.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 27-year-old male, Div. Sup. Bde .
• **Charge:** Speeding 110/45.
• **Location:** Walthourville.

• **Subject:** Specialist, 22-year-old male,separate unit.
• **Charges:** Driving under the influence, speeding 66/45, improper lane usage.
• **Location:** Savannah.

• **Subject:** Sergeant, 29-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Fighting in public place, affray.
• **Location:** Savannah.

• **Subject:** Civilian, 24-year-old male.
• **Charges:** Driving while license suspended, speeding 44/30.
• **Location:** Hunter.

• **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 24-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Wrongful use of cocaine.
• **Location:** Hunter.

• **Subject:** Specialist, 20-year-old male, 2nd Bde.
• **Charge:** Wrongful usage of cocaine.
• **Location:** Fort Bragg, N. Car.

• **Subject:** Private, 19-year-old male, 1st. Bde.
• **Charge:** Wrongful use of marijuana.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Sergeant, 29-year-old male, separate unit.

• **Charge:** Burglary.
• **Location:** Titusville, Fla.

• **Subject:** Civilian, 24-year-old female.
• **Charges:** Driving on suspended license, speeding 82/55.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Family member, 36-year-old female.
• **Charges:** Forgery of a personal check, larceny of private property.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Sergeant 1st Class, 34-year-old male, separate unit.

• **Charges:** Aggravated assault using handgun, threat of victim, child abuse, burglary of occupried residence, destruction/tampering with evidence, battery.
• **Location:** Lakeland, Fla.

• **Subject:** Private, 22-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Damage to government property.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 20-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Theft by shoplifting.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Specialist, 21-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Wrongful possessionof marijuana.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Sergeant, 31-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Failure to perform duties as ground guide.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Private 1st Class, 19-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charges:** Wrongful possession of cocaine, wrongful use of cocaine, wrongful possession of methamphetamine, wrongful use of methamphetamine.
• **Location:** Savannah.

• **Subject:** Specialist, 24-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charges:** Simple battery, obstruction of justice by fleeing.
• **Location:** Savannah.

• **Subject:** Staff Sgt., 42-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charge:** Improper left turn.
• **Location:** Fort Stewart.

• **Subject:** Staff Sgt., 28-year-old male, separate unit.
• **Charges:** Driving under the influence, improper lane usage.
• **Location:** Savannah.

Housing outlook — still good for HAAF

Diane Borges
GMH Military Housing

GMH Military Housing has been busy listening to residents, making improvements, and holding events to make family housing at Hunter Army Airfield the “Southern Living Station of Choice”.

GMH believes that as a company and as individuals, it has a duty to provide a quality, well-managed living environment for every resident and attempts to respond to every resident’s needs and manage each community and home as if it were its own.

From small to large projects and services, GMH continues to make improvements.

During the month of January, GMH completed 549 work orders of which 27 were emergencies, 19 were urgent and 503 were routine.

Repairs to such items as HVACs, plumbing and water heaters were accomplished.

The old tree house in Callaway Circle was removed and the playgrounds were repaired.

Substantial renovations to the first home in Wilson Acres have been completed.

Wilson Acres also received updates to the kitchen and bathroom areas as well as lighting, flooring, paint and carpeting.

The same types of renovations are to be completed in seventeen more homes in the coming months.

The construction of new homes remains on track.

The first of the new units as well as the new Community Center in New Gannam are expected to be ready in April.

The new homes in New Savannah are going up fast.

The first homes are expected to be ready in August.

GMH Community Management doors are always open.

Its friendly teams understand the needs of service members and their families, especially since many members of the GMH staff are retired military members as well as spouses of current service members.

As part of the care and concern of its family housing residents, GMH has set up ‘Soldier’s House’.

This three-bedroom house in Gannam Heights has been established as a refuge in case of emergency situations.

Should something occur in a resident’s home, such as a fire or failed plumbing, GMH has the ability to quarter them in this house until the emergency is over.

Through the assistance, donations and kindness of departing Soldiers and their families, Soldier’s House is fully furnished in-cluding sheets, towels, dishes, pots and pans.

There is no charge to stay at Soldier’s House; to GMH it’s simply the right thing to do.

For GMH Military Housing, the ultimate objective is to create great communities where Soldiers and their families can proudly call their home and would wish to remain or return to throughout their military careers.

For those not yet living on post and reaping the benefits, there are two and three bedroom junior-enlisted homes currently available.

Any one with questions or interested in moving on post and living in family housing, is welcome to contact the GMH Community Management Office at 912-459-2141.

3ID IN BRIEF

Stewart	Hunter	Winn /Tuttle
<p>Bowling and Golf</p> <p>Free bowling and shoe rental at Marne and Hunter Lanes, 1 — 5 p.m., the last Saturday of the month, for Soldiers and family members.</p> <p>No golf fees at Taylors Creek and Hunter Courses from 1 — 5 p.m., the last Thursday of every month.</p> <p>Golf cart rental, \$7 per person for 9 holes or \$12 for 18 holes.</p> <p>Red Cross CPR Instructors</p> <p>If you are a current CPR/First Aid Instructor with the American Red Cross, you need to register with the Savannah Chapter — Liberty Branch to keep your certification current.</p> <p>You can call 876-3975 or visit the local office in the Winn-Dixie Shopping Center between Goodwill and Pro-Feet for more information.</p> <p>Track and Field/Soccer</p> <p>Registration is open and FREE to all current CYS members living on or off post.</p> <p>All children must have a current physical on file at time of registration.</p> <p>For more information, call 767-2312/4371.</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Read a Poem to Your Sweetheart — Schedule a 30 minute appointment to record a DVD of you reading to your sweetheart, from 1 to 8:30 p.m.</p> <p>Cooking Class</p> <p>Cooking Class — at Club Stewart from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p>	<p>Cost is \$5. Advance signups required by today.</p> <p>For more information call 368-2212.</p> <p>Easter Holiday Brunch</p> <p>Club Stewart offers a Sunday brunch every week. The public is always welcome. On Easter Sunday, March 27, there will be three seatings starting at 10:30 a.m., noon, and 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>The price for adults is \$11.95 (\$10.95 with church bulletin); children ages 9 to 11, half prices; and children under 9 are free.</p> <p>For more information or to make reservations, call 368-2122</p> <p>Road Closure</p> <p>The northern boundary of Hwy. 119 to the intersection of Hwy. 44 West will be closed March 22 and 23 for training purposes.</p> <p>Closure times are 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.</p> <p>For more information call 767-4895.</p> <p>Warrant Officer Statement</p> <p>The United States Army is looking for highly motivated Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airman to fill its Warrant Officer ranks. Positions are open in all 41 active duty warrant officer specialties, and the following are experiencing critical shortages: Military Intelligence, Special Forces, Food Service, Criminal Investigation and Airdrop Systems Technicians. Applicants with less than 12 years active federal service are encouraged to apply.</p> <p>For more information visit www.usarec.army.mil/warrant.</p> <p>Tax Center</p> <p>Tax Center is now open to assist military ID card holders prepare their tax returns. The center can file your return electronically, and arrange direct deposit of refunds. Preparers can assist while you wait, or drop-off your return, and pick it up when it is ready to file.</p> <p>The tax center is at the legal center, located in Bldg 1211, directly across from the Garrison Headquarters, from 9 a.m. through 4 p.m., weekdays. Call 303-3675/3697 for more information.</p> <p>Fundraiser</p> <p>The AER Fundraising Campaign runs March 1 through April 15.</p> <p>Your contributions help Soldiers and their families in financial need.</p> <p>See your unit rep to fill out a contribution slip or call AER Officer Doris Clark at 352-5301.</p> <p>Recycling Hours</p> <p>New hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 4 pm. The center has an after hour drop-off, located outside of the fenced area. Use weekends or after 4 pm to deposit pre-sorted recyclables.</p> <p>Call 240-0322 for more information..</p> <p>DECA Scholarship</p> <p>Commissary scholarship applications are due Monday and must be turned in at the commissary. Children of active, reserve, retired or deceased service members can compete for merit-based awards up to \$1,500.</p> <p>Dependents age 21 (or 23, if a full-time student) who will be attending college in 2005-06 are eligible. For more information, see Web site www.militaryscholar.org.</p> <p>Free Child Care</p> <p>Free Child Care for dependents of deployed service members is available at Hunter Child Development Center the first Saturday of each month. The registration fee is waived, but you must enroll child with CDC. Reservations, blue registration card, and acopy of orders are required. For more information, call 352-6115 or 352-6075.</p> <p>Golf Tournament</p> <p>Play with collegiate golfers from around the nation during ther GEICO Invitational College-Am on March 11.</p> <p>Shotgun start at 11:45 a.m. Also, come out and watch the Collegiate Tourn on March 12 and 13.</p> <p>For more information on how to participate in this tournament, call 352-5622.</p> <p>T-Ball and Baseball Sign-ups</p> <p>Pick up a sign-up packet and register for Hunter youth baseball, T-ball, at Bldg. 1286 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays. Participation is free.</p> <p>Children must have CYS registration and sports physical completed at the time of registration. Leagues are: T-Ball for ages 5-6, Coach Pitch for ages 7-8, Pitch Machine for ages 9-10, Fast Pitch for ages 11-12, and Fast Pitch Little League for ages 13 and 14.</p> <p>For more information, call Geno Smalls, sports and fitness manager, at 352-5851.</p>	<p>Newborn TRICARE Prime</p> <p>Parents now have 60 days from the date of birth to enroll their newborn in TRICARE Prime.</p> <p>If the 60-day window is not met, the child will be automatically enrolled in TRICARE Standard. You must enroll your child in DEERS before you can enroll into TRICARE.</p> <p>For more information about DEERS enrollment, contact the Fort Stewart ID Card Section at 767-4909 and the Hunter ID Card Section at 352-5726. Call TRICARE at 1-800-444-5445.</p> <p>TRICARE Phone Numbers</p> <p>For general health care information, you can call the Humana Military Audio Library at 877-217-7946. For more information of if you have questions about TRICARE, you can call TRICARE at 800-444-5445 or the Health Benefits Office at 370-6633 or 800-652-9221.</p> <p>EDIS</p> <p>Military families with children up to 3 years old who may be at risk for developmental delays can call Educational and Developmental Intervention Services for a free screening. Services include home visits, occupational therapy, special instruction, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, vision and hearing screenings, family training, developmental screenings and assessments. For more information, call 370-6370.</p> <p>Walk to Winn Program</p> <p>This 12-week walking program is designed to increase activity, water intake and fruit and vegetable consumption. Registration has begun and spaces are limited.</p> <p>For more information, call 370-5071 to reserve your place.</p> <p>New Tuttle Pharmacy Hours</p> <p>The pharmacy is open 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday thru Wednesday and Friday. It is open 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. and 2 to 5:30 p.m. Thursdays. It is closed weekends and federal holidays.</p> <p>Strategy for Staying Healthy</p> <p>Upon completion of the class, individuals will be given an over-the-counter pharmacy card for use at Winn and Tuttle. The next class at Winn is 2 to 3 p.m., Thursday. Tuttle's next class is 10 to 11 a.m. March 24.</p> <p>To register, call Community Health Nursing at 370-5071 or 1-800-652-9221.</p> <p>New Tuttle Pharmacy Hours</p> <p>The pharmacy is open 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday thru Wednesday and Friday. It is open 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. and 2 to 5:30 p.m. Thursdays. It is closed weekends and federal holidays.</p> <p>Baby Basic Training</p> <p>Baby Basic Training offers first time fathers-to-be the chance to ask questions and practice taking care of their child through hands-on training. The class, facilitated by a man, will cover topics including diaper changes, bathing and holding an infant and what to expect during pregnancy, labor and delivery. For more information, call 370-6779.</p>

3rd ID — from Page 1A

committed to the mission as any they will ever see on their streets.

“Maj. Gen. Webster, you’ve been a great friend to the Cav.,” he continued, “and I know that the people of Baghdad will embrace you and your Soldiers as warmly as they have the 1st Cav.”

Upon taking command of TF Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Webster acknowledged the responsibility being given to him and the Marne Soldiers, and accepted the mission at hand.

“The 3rd Infantry Division has trained hard and is ready,” he said. “We will work with our Iraqi partners as they continue to increase their capability to protect the Iraqi people from any foe.”

“We will help the people of Iraq maintain their right to freedom and the pursuit of a prosperous future for all Iraqi citizens,” Webster promised. “Our Soldiers know this is right and just.”

Berm — from Page 1A

Johnson of Mason, W.V., had literally been down this road before.

“Coming across the berm the second time, you just think about what to expect,” Johnson said. “You think about the enemy being there, waiting for you.”

A veteran of Desert Storm as well as OIF 1, Johnson said he felt mixed emotions about returning to Iraq for the third time.

“You never think you’ll come back to the same place three times,” Johnson said. “The only difference now is that this is a peacekeeping mission or humanitarian effort, compared to the first two times. We’re trying to get them on their feet.”

Unit member Spc. James Dalton of Mill Valley, Calif., anticipated “a whole lot of nothing” when he crossed the berm the second time.

“That’s pretty much what we saw the first time,” he said.

The recent approach march was a far cry from Dalton’s experience in OIF 1. Then, he was involved in “miles long, running firefight” in the northwest corner of Baghdad.

“As we were driving we were taking small-arms fire and (rocket-propelled grenade) rounds,” Dalton said of his OIF 1 experience. He also recalled some horrific sights.

“Everywhere we went, everything was on fire... there were bodies everywhere,” Dalton said. “The country looks a lot better now.”

Casualty — from Page 1A

Byrd also added that he needed the help of the community to control the rumors that have done nothing but add fear to the community.

He said, “This case has become an urban legend on Stewart, and I must stress that this has only happened one time and only one time and that the installation is safe and secure.”

The MP’s first meeting of the day is a review of the daily blotter and current crime trends and statistics.

Based upon this meeting, Byrd stated that assets will be re-directed to Named Area’s of Interest on the installation.

“We are conducting both overt and covert surveillance all the time, based upon current criminal intelligence” Byrd said. “We also are in constant contact with the local law enforcement agencies and share all available information about crime occurring both on and off the installation”

“Fort Stewart is a very safe place to live”, said 2nd Lt. Megan Flynt, 546th MP Company platoon leader. “MP’s are out working 24 hours a day.”

The MPs have many assets they are using to help with the security of the installation.

“There is a random antiterrorism major prevention team, which takes vehicles at the gate and checks the vehicles for any illegal substance,” Byrd said.

“Another great asset we have is our K-9 teams which walk through the installation making sure the housing areas are secure,” Flynt said. “The MP’s also utilize bike patrols which can reach some areas faster than a normal patrol based upon their mobility.”

Byrd also added that many MP’s are working undercover throughout the installation.

He further added that crime is very low citing a couple of reasons: the deployment and the proactive approach in re-directing patrol assets to hot spots are helping.

Byrd strongly said “We are doing a good job.”

Licking — from Page 1A

Hood, they have a strategy that works best for them and within two seconds of getting hit, they are out and scanning their sector.

“It’s just like brushing your teeth now,” he said, “we have this process down to an art.”

Recently, the platoon lost Sgt. Seth Trahan, from Crowley, La., to an IED attack. Sandel says that until this happened getting hit seemed normal and like it was just part of the job.

The Soldiers were clearing an intersection and as Trahan rounded the corner, the device went off, instantly killing him and wounding two others.

“We weren’t complacent on the patrols, by any means,” says Sandel, “but until it killed somebody, getting hit was a routine thing.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Steven Stuckey, from Shreveport, La. is the sergeant major for 1/156th AR.

He feels that Sandel’s spirit and enthusiasm for his job have not diminished over time, even in the face of such adversity.

“A lot of the guys who get hit by IEDs get scared and start to wear down, but Sandel has not,” said Stuckey.

Stuckey says that the leadership that Sandel has shown is exemplary and shines through in his own attitude for his job. His leadership is also reflected in the attitude of his Soldiers toward him.

“He never stops and he’s always high spirited,” said Stuckey, “his Soldiers like to go out with Sandel.”

“I was nervous, which is natural,” said Sgt. Adam Marriott, a medic from Company B, about crossing the berm this time. “It’s a different situation now, though. The attacks are different.”

A Clarksville, Ohio, native, Marriott was with the battalion during the battle for southern Baghdad in OIF 1. According to Marriott, the fighting had caused a stockpile of enemy munitions to cook off, and long-range missiles “were spiraling over the column.”

“You don’t reflect on it until it’s over with,” said Marriott of his combat experiences in OIF 1.

That experience seems to have paid off. During a halt while driving through Baghdad this time, battalion Soldiers heard the distinct sounds of AK-47 fire. It turned out to be Iraqi authorities firing warning shots to clear traffic, but as a veteran, Dalton said he knew immediately, from the sound, that the shots weren’t aimed at him.

“I listened, because if you hear a whizzing sound it’s coming toward you, but not near you,” he said. “If you hear a crack, it’s time to seek cover. I figured if I didn’t hear return fire from our side, it wasn’t a firefight. I’ve been under fire before. The first time is kind of a shock, but once you’ve been there and done that, it’s easier to do the right thing.”

The shooting occurred in an area Johnson recalled was the scene of heavy fighting during OIF 1. Johnson said he immediately began scanning his sector to find the source of the shooting.



Department of Defense

Soldiers, Coalition allies and Iraqi personnel secure and survey the scene of a car bombing. The explosion occurred approximately 500 meters from one of entrances to the Coalition Provisional Authority. These are the type of devices Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Sandel has managed to survive.

“On a combat patrol, you’re really alert, because you don’t know what to expect,” Johnson said. “You know it’s out there, but you don’t know where. It just pops up. You have to stay low, next to the truck, so at least you have cover.”

You don’t have to look hard to find combat patches in the battalion. Many soldiers wear the division’s distinctive, diagonally striped square patch on both sleeves, signifying that they took part in OIF 1. Nearly 35 percent of his unit are veterans, said Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Gary Brito, who is from Hyannis, Md.

“They understand the harshness of war. They are hardened soldiers,” he said.

Unlike OIF 1, OIF 3 is not a conventional fight, Brito said.

“This is more in the nature of stability and support operations,” he said. “We have to engage with the people and make them realize the benefits of democracy. I do not think brute force is the answer.

Having said that, our soldiers are prepared to secure the country and help develop an effective Iraqi Army and Police force. Unlike OIF 1, it’s hard to tell the combatants from the non-combatants. Everyone’s in civilian clothes.”

Dalton agreed.

“It’s not strictly combat anymore,” he said. “It’s a low intensity conflict. The rules of engagement are more restrictive, and you have to be real careful not to hit civilians.”

Another change from OIF 1 is the unit configuration. As one of the Army’s new Units of Action, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team fields a mix of maneuver elements, to include two infantry battalions, two armor battalions and a field artillery battalion. Brito described his unit as a “combined arms maneuver battalion.”

“(The new configuration) gives the commander on the ground some of the combat multipliers he wouldn’t normally have,” Brito said.

Both Dalton and Marriott were guarded about the Iraqi elections.

“It’s kind of up in the air,” Marriott said. “I think it’s a step forward, but I don’t live here, so it’s not my place to say if it’s a good or a bad thing.”

“It’s a step in the right direction,” Dalton said. “I don’t have enough knowledge to predict how it will turn out, but it seems like we’re trying to do the right thing over here.”

Both Soldiers, however, are committed to the fight.

“I look at what soldiers have done before me, and I figure I owe them something,” Marriott said. “Hopefully, my kids won’t have to deal with this.”

“We need to assist Iraq Security Force,” Dalton said. “We need to train and support them until they’re able to secure the country on their own. I take care of my little piece. If everyone does that, I figure everything will turn out ok.”

Combat support Soldiers secure Iraqi Police station

Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mountain Division

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad — A motley assembly of combat support Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division, earned their combat patches the ‘hooah’ way as they provided security for 10 days at an Iraqi Police station in support of the democratic elections.

The Soldiers, many whom never left the confines of Camp Liberty, were organized and trained days before the mission in an attempt to have maximum boots on the ground during the elections, said Master Sgt. Richard Porter, an operations sergeant from 2 BCT, who trained the Soldiers.

A former drill sergeant and airborne and mountaineer trainer, Porter brought the Soldiers up to speed on basic rifle marksmanship, close quarter combat, and vehicle and body searches.

The Soldiers weren’t ignorant to basic Soldier skills, but they were definitely out

of practice, he said.

“Soldiers lacked that type of training at that time, such as searching vehicles, casualty evacuation,” he said. “That’s simply because on a normal day on the job they don’t deal with that. They all had that training before, but they needed a refresher.”

The Soldiers diversity of military occupational specialties ran the gamut from signal, personnel and staff judge advocate Porter said he was surprised and impressed with their motivation.

“One signal Soldier told me it was his first time off post on a mission. He told me he was excited,” Porter said. “Every-one was pretty motivated to get out and do it. I thought a lot of them would think of it as being stuck on a detail.”

For Spec. Louis Flynn, a terrain specialist attached to 2nd BCT from 100th Engineer Company out of Fort Bragg, N.C., the experience of doing infantry-style work was well worth the hard work.

“It was more physically

demanding than my regular job, but it was also more satisfying,” Flynn said. “Overall, it was a positive experience. I feel fortunate to be able to take part in a more hands on mission.”

Flynn said he enjoyed the experience, but knew it was a serious job with severe implications if the security team failed. IP stations were considered likely targets during the elections, and Flynn and other Soldiers could not be certain every Iraqi around them was friendly. The IP station was also used as a staging point for 2nd BCT operations in Iraq, which made the security even more vital.

“The security of everyone in our compound relied heavily on our alertness,” Flynn said.

Some of the security detail also participated in foot patrols and provided outer cordon security during raids with infantry Soldiers and IP detectives. This was a first time experience for Flynn and many Soldiers from the security team.



Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin

A Soldier from the 10th Mountain Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team surveys the streets of Baghdad at an Iraqi Police station prior to election day. Soldiers from 2nd BCT supported the IPs during the elections by adding security and helping during raids.

“(We were) patrolling at night, moving stealthily along the urban landscape of this nation’s capital,” Flynn said. “(It was) a homogenous mixture of IPs and American Soldiers moving about, all coming from different walks of life having only the soldiering bond to keep us together.”

Porter and Flynn both said they felt the Commando’s presence greatly diminished any possible attacks. Every possible avenue of attack

was guarded by Soldiers who only a week prior were making maps, filing paperwork and connecting phone lines.

“Even when we were out there, other IP stations got attacked,” Porter said. “The way we presented ourselves may have prevented an attack... Even if they thought they couldn’t do it, I knew they could. They brought different talents to the job. They did an outstanding job.”

Many Soldiers said they valued their time “outside the

wire” and felt proud to contribute to the success of the democratic elections. Porter said it is something they will remember for the rest of their military careers and their lives.

“It was an opportunity for them to tell war stories they never could before,” he said. “Now they can go home and talk to their wives, their kids and other Soldiers and say ‘I did that.’ They don’t have to say they were on a base all year.”

82nd Airborne provides security for Baghdad's convention center

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Mike Pryor
82nd Airborne Division

BAGHDAD — Amid the noise and chaos of Baghdad, the Iraqi Convention Center stands like an oasis of calm. With its sleek, modern architecture, sunlit atrium, and gently swaying palm trees, the building feels miles away from the violence plaguing other parts of the city.

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division aim to keep it that way.

Approximately 150 paratroopers from A Company of the 82nd's 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment moved into the convention center in early February to provide security and protection for the government officials, diplomats, contractors, aid workers, and journalists who regularly conduct business at the facility.

While the mission bears little resemblance to the airborne assaults that have traditionally been the 82nd's specialty, the paratroopers of A Company are taking their current assignment just as seriously.

"It's a very important job. World leaders meet here on a daily basis and it's our job to protect them," said Pfc. John Debrock.

The paratroopers' tasks include manning checkpoints, guard towers and observation points at various strategic positions around the area, which also include the swag Al Rasheed Hotel and the Iraqi Interim Government building.

Security is tight. Anyone coming in to the area must pass through multiple search points. To enter the main pedestrian checkpoint requires undergoing two pat-downs, four identification checks and a 'once over' by a military working dog, said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Daniels, one of A Company's squad leaders.

The security is necessary because of the strategic importance of the facility. The ICC is the nexus for much of what's happening in Iraq today. Inside its conference rooms and auditoriums, issues of government, diplomacy, reconstruction and security are debated by some of the biggest movers and shakers in the country.

"This like the center of Iraq right now, which basically makes it the center of the world," said Spc. Timothy Viccari, as he and Debrock screened for weapons and IDs at a checkpoint one day.

Hour after hour, a steady stream of people from all walks of life flowed through Viccari and Debrock's gate. Their faces were a snapshot of post-war Iraq. At one point, an ancient, robed Iraqi woman with faded blue tribal tattoos on her face waited just behind a slick-look-



Pfc. John Debrock, paratrooper, A Co, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, examines the ID card of an Iraqi man attempting to enter through checkpoint at the Iraqi Convention Center in Baghdad.

ing reporter with thousands of dollars worth of high-tech camera gear strapped around his neck. They each received the same thorough inspection.

As the day dragged on, Viccari and Debrock cracked jokes and bantered with their interpreter to break the monotony. Manning checkpoints and guard towers is not exciting work. It's not "hooah," they said. But despite their occasional grumbles, the men knew how important their job was.

Providing security so the new government can get up and running is a part of finishing what America started when it toppled Saddam Hussein from power, Debrock said.

"Some people may have been skeptical about the invasion, so helping with the rebuilding is a chance to show that our intentions were good," he said.

For A Co's paratroopers, the trade-off for their hard work out at the checkpoints is the perk of living in the convention center. Inside their sectioned-off area on the ground floor of the building, the paratroopers have bunks, wall-to-wall carpeting, heating and air conditioning, indoor plumbing, free phones, and other amenities.

A Company's first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Mark Byrd, finally got an office all to himself when he moved into the ICC after months of sharing a cramped room with his commander and executive officer. The spacious,

oval-shaped office with leather couches, carpeting, and central air became a source of pride. As he walked around the convention center he sang the praises of the office to people he met like a proud new father.

"You know what the best part is?" he asked one curious state department contractor, "Being able to walk to the latrine in bare feet!"

The ICC is like a mini-United Nations. At various times, the paratroopers have found themselves rubbing elbows with Ghurka security guards, Iraqi Sheiks, Egyptian Al-Jazeera reporters, South African mercenaries, and American politicians.

The unusual mixture of personalities and backgrounds in the facility has led to some strange occurrences.

One day Pfc. Chris Norris was coming inside from playing touch football outside on the lawn when someone hurried past him surrounded by bodyguards.

"Someone said, 'Hey look, Hillary Clinton!' I was like, 'Shut up.' But then I turned around and, yup, it was Hillary Clinton," said Norris.

Another time an informal pie-eating contest among the paratroopers was captured on tape by a passing TV news crew. The footage ran that night on Fox News.

When they're not on shift, doing physical training, or making the nightly news, the paratroopers have been



Spc. Timothy Viccari of Tampa, Fla., paratrooper, A Co, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, places a pistol in a lockbox for safekeeping while its owner is inside the Iraqi Convention Center. Weapons are not authorized inside the facility. Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Daniels (background) helps direct arriving Iraqis.

occupying themselves by training for the future.

"We're making the most of our time here," said Sgt. Darrel Patterson.

In the next month, they plan to conduct training on airborne procedures, land navigation, first aid, military history, issuing and reading operation orders, and other topics, Patterson said. They've even scheduled a ruck march.

In the meantime, A Company's paratroopers are just enjoying their new surroundings.

They have good reason to - their previous home was an underground abandoned parking garage that flooded with raw sewage every time it rained. But they all know everything good comes to an end, especially in the army.

The bottom line, said Viccari, is that A Company should enjoy what it has while it has it.

"Last time we were here, we dug a hole and lived in it for five days. Now I've got wireless internet running right up to my bed. I can't complain," he said.